



Monterey County Office of Education

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March 5, 2003

The Honorable Terrance R. Duncan
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Monterey County
P. O. Box 1819
Salinas, CA 93902

SUBJECT: Response to the 2002 Monterey County Grand Jury Report

Dear Judge Duncan:

As required by Penal Code Section 933(b), the following is the response by the Monterey County Superintendent of Schools and the Monterey County Board of Education to the "Findings" and "Recommendations" of the 2002 Monterey County Grand Jury Report.

Because response to the same Findings and Recommendations are required by both the County Superintendent of Schools and the County Board of Education, and because the County Superintendent is the ex officio Secretary to the County Board of Education (E.C. 1010), Responses have been combined into a single document.

This document was reviewed by the Monterey County Board of Education and the Monterey County Superintendent of Schools, in a public session on March 5, 2003, where action was taken to adopt it as the formal response to the Grand Jury 2002 Report.

Should the Grand Jury have other questions or points in need of clarification, I remain available to provide information and assistance.

Sincerely,

William D. Barr, Ed.D.
Monterey County Superintendent of Schools
and Secretary to the Monterey County Board of Education

FINDINGS & RESPONSES TO FINDINGS

FINDING # ONE:

Basic, practical, relevant, and inexpensive training courses for prospective school board members is not available in Monterey County.

RESPONSE:

We DISAGREE with this Finding. Informal training is readily available.

District superintendents, currently sitting school board members, individuals who have previously served on school boards the County Superintendent of Schools and Members of the County Board of Education are frequently contacted by persons who are considering filing papers to seek seats on public school boards.

The Monterey County Superintendent of Schools suggests offering a general workshop for candidates at the close of the declaration period in order to acquaint the candidates with the general roles of school board members.

FINDING # TWO:

In the past, training for elected school board members in leadership skills has been available through the Office of the Monterey County Superintendent of Schools. In addition, some continuing education has occasionally been available and has provided board members information about education-related legislation and court decisions that may impact the schools they serve.

RESPONSE:

We DISAGREE with Finding # Two. Because the Finding is worded in the past tense, it implies that training for elected school board members and the continuing education of school board members is no longer available. This is not correct.

Training and continuing education for school board members is currently available and will remain so into the foreseeable future.

Following each biannual election, the County Superintendent, his staff and subject area experts offer training sessions to newly elected and re-elected board members. The topics of these sessions include:

- "Board Members' Roles",
- "Collective Bargaining/Personnel Issues",
- "School Finance and the Budget",
- "Curriculum and Instruction",
- "Appropriate Use of Closed Sessions and the Brown 'Open Meeting' Act", and
- "Making and Monitoring Board Decisions."

Also, on an on-going basis, "Law Consortia" are offered to board members, superintendents, and districts' staff to educate them on new legislation and court decisions which have the potential for impact upon the districts.

The County Superintendent and the County Board of Education stand ready to offer assistance to any district with specific and individualized aid and advice.

County Board of Education members have taken seats on district boards when, due to resignation or other reasons, that particular board can not achieve a quorum of board members for its meetings.

The County Superintendent and the County Board of Education have met with individual boards for the purposes of sharing their insights and experience in boardsmanship and district operations.

FINDING # THREE:

In November 2002, the MCOE began sponsoring advanced training in the form of the CSBA "Masters in Governance" program for sitting board members which will consist of nine modules of instruction and participation over a two-year period. The program will be held at the MCOE facility. On completion of the program graduates will receive a "Masters in Governance" certificate.

RESPONSE:

We AGREE with this Finding. The MCOE is sponsoring the "Masters In Governance" program for sitting school board members, superintendents and others. This is a nine session program offered in conjunction with the California School Boards Association. This program has been

offered in the past in other areas of California, and has been brought to Monterey County to make it more accessible for local residents. The successful and positive response to the current session anticipates that it will continue to be made locally available.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2002 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury recommends that:

RECOMMENDATION # ONE:

The MCOE create an introductory training program for potential school board candidates; the program be offered free of charge to acquaint candidates with the responsibilities of a school board member; the program be offered prior to the filing date for school board elections, and a certificate awarded at its completion;

RESPONSE:

Informal training is readily available. District superintendents, currently sitting school board members, individuals who have previously served on school boards the County Superintendent of Schools and Members of the County Board of Education are frequently contacted by persons who are considering filing papers to seek seats on public school boards.

These contacts tend to be on a confidential basis, since these potential candidates are interested in learning about the roles and responsibilities of district board members prior to making a decision to formally announce their candidacy. By having these informal discussions, persons who are in the decision making process avoid public disclosure of their personal and private considerations.

The suggested formal training program could violate an individual's rights to their personal and private decision making process prior to declaring their candidacy. Bringing together every person who is weighing the decision to seek a school board seat could be interpreted as a new requirement to serve on a public board and contrary to current code requiring only residency and voter registration qualifications.

The Monterey County Superintendent of Schools suggests offering a general workshop for candidates at the close of the declaration period in order to acquaint the candidates with the roles of school board members. This would be a newly structured workshop that focuses on the role and responsibilities of school board members.

A certificate could easily be granted for attendance.

RECOMMENDATION # TWO:

The MCOE offer a follow-up program for newly elected and sitting school board members immediately after school board elections, covering specific responsibilities in oversight and a certificate of completion be given to indicate completion of this second phase of board membership preparation.

RESPONSE:

This is already being done through existing New Board Member workshops.

RECOMMENDATION # THREE:

The MCOE encourage as many school board members as possible to attend the "Master in Governance" training course on an ongoing basis, either at board or personal expense.

RESPONSE:

This Recommendation exactly follows procedures already in existence for the "Masters in Governance" program.

RECOMMENDATION # FOUR:

The MCOE make training and the award of certificates of completion known to the public through local publicity to increase public awareness of the importance of special education (sic) for school board members and recognition for those who participate.

RESPONSE:

At the completion of the "Masters in Governance" program, each graduate will be publicly recognized and every effort will be made to encourage the local media to acknowledge the dedication and sacrifice of these graduates.